MY HAPPY MARRIAGE

3

ORIGINAL CONCEPT
AKUMI AGITOGI
(Fujimi L Bunko/KADOKAWA)

ART
RITO KOHSAKA

CHARACTER DESIGN
TSUKIHO TSUKIOKA

MY HAPPY MARRIAGE

3

ORIGINAL CONCEPT
AKUMI AGITOGI
(Fujimi L Bunko/KADOKAWA)

ART
RITO KOHSAKA

CHARACTER DESIGN
TSUKIHO TSUKIOKA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15
Uncompromising ——— 3

CHAPTER 16
Our First Act of Defiance —— 41

CHAPTER 17
Betrothal ——— 73

CHAPTER 18
My New Life with Lord Kudo – 115

CHAPTER 19
Call Me Sister ——— 145

CHAPTER 20
An Audience ——— 177

SPECIAL SHORT STORY ——— 215

Chapter 15: Uncompromising

I'VE BEEN...

...ABDUCTED.

GASP

TUG

I HOPE SHE DIDN'T GET INJURED.

SLUMP

I HOPE YURIE IS ALL RIGHT.

I'M SO SORRY.

HE WARNED ME, AND YET I FORGOT MY AMULET.

LORD KUDO IS GOING TO BE SO DISPLEASED.

I'M IN...

I FEEL LIKE...

SINGER

...STEP-MOTHER AND KAYA MAY ARRIVE AT ANY MOMENT.

...THE SAIMORI STOREHOUSE.

...NOW I HAVE A PLACE OF RESPITE.

BUT I'VE ALSO RELAXED, AND MY ABILITY TO ENDURE IS WEAKER NOW.

I'VE GOTTEN A LITTLE STRONGER, YES.

I'M AFRAID TO SEE THEM.

I COULD BEAR IT IN THE PAST, BUT...

GASP

SLAM

THERE YOU ARE, DEAREST SISTER.

ガチャ
RATTLE
ガチャ
RATTLE

ガタン
THUD

CLATTER

TNK
TNK

DRIP

CREEEAAAK

DID YOU SLEEP WELL?

I THOUGHT YOUR HEART MIGHT HAVE GONE AND GIVEN OUT.

HONESTLY, YOU WERE TAKING YOUR SWEET TIME WAKING UP.

A KIMONO LIKE THAT IS MUCH TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR YOU.

LOOK AT YOU.

...HAVE YOU—

WHY ...

SHF

TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR ME...

I'VE THOUGHT THE SAME.

NOW THAT IT'S DIRTY, IT SUITS YOU MUCH BETTER.

SMACK

THIS IS YOUR FAULT!

IT IS *YOUR* FAULT...

...THAT MY LIFE IS UNRAVELING AGAIN!

NGH!

THUD

STOMP

OW—

...WITH MY EMOTIONS CLOSED OFF...

...I MUST SIMPLY WAIT...

JUST AS I ALWAYS USED TO...

YOU IRRI-TATE ME!

WHF

JUST ENDURE IT.

YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER THAN US NOW THAT YOU'VE GONE TO THE KUDO FAMILY?!

...FOR THIS STORM OF PAIN TO PASS.

WHF

YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING SERVANT! THAT'S WHERE YOU BELONG!

WHF

ANNUL YOUR ENGAGEMENT WITH LORD KUDO IMMEDIATELY.

GRAB

!

GRIP

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT TO DIE IN THE DIRT.

HOW DARE YOU NOT KNOW YOUR PLACE!

URK

BECOMING HIS WIFE WILL BE MUCH TOO HARD OF A BURDEN FOR YOU!

WHY NOT SWAP WITH ME?

OH YES!

DON'T WORRY, DEAR SISTER!

I'LL BE HIS WIFE IN YOUR STEAD.

YOU WHEEDLED HIM INTO BUYING YOU THIS EXPENSIVE KIMONO, DIDN'T YOU? SO IT SHOULD BE EASY.

YOU WILL TURN DOWN LORD KUDO'S PROPOSAL.

LISTEN TO ME.

AND THEN YOU CAN HAVE KOJI BACK!

IF I JUST GIVE IN HERE...

...IT'LL ALL GO AWAY.

THAT'S WHAT I ALWAYS DID.

IT WOULD BE SO EASY.

THAT'S HOW I SURVIVED.

THE STORMS WOULD PASS QUICKER THAT WAY.

I NEVER COM-PLAINED WHEN MY THINGS WERE STOLEN.

IT WAS EASIER WITHOUT ANY ATTACH-MENTS.

...THEN I KNOW THEY'D LET ME GO.

...AND TELL THEM I'LL GIVE UP MY ROLE AS HIS FIANCÉE...

IF I FOLD RIGHT AWAY LIKE I USED TO...

I DIDN'T EVEN SAY ANY-THING...

...WHEN THEY STOLE MY MOTHER'S HEIR-LOOMS.

...AND LIVE LIKE A SERVANT.

THEN I CAN HARDEN MY HEART AGAIN...

...FIGURE SOME-THING OUT ON MY OWN...

BUT...

HMM? WHAT WAS THAT?

...NOT.

I WILL...

...NOT.

TWITCH

I WANT TO STAY BY HIS SIDE.

THAT'S WHERE I WANT TO BE.

I WILL NOT...

I WILL NOT...

...ANNUL THE ENGAGE-MENT.

...LET ANYONE ELSE TAKE THAT SPOT.

DO NOT SPEAK BACK TO ME!

SMACK

ぽた

SPLATTER

I AM—

PLIP

ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED?

BUT WHY, MY DEAR SISTER?

YOU WOULD GET THE SAIMORI HOUSE *AND* KOJI ALL TO YOURSELF.

...GIVE IT UP.

AND I WILL NOT...

I AM LORD KUDO'S—

KIYOKA KUDO'S FIANCÉE.

!

WHAT WAS THAT SOUND?

LORD SAIMORI!

A BOLT OF LIGHTNING STRUCK THE GATE—

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF—

LORD KUDO?!

LORD SAIMORI.

WHERE IS MIYO?

LET ME...

...ASK YOU ONE THING.

(SIGH

AND HOW DARE THE TATSUISHIS GET INVOLVED IN THIS...

DON'T TELL ME...

...THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE?

LET ME ASK YOU, SIR.

I HAD BELIEVED THAT YOU SOUGHT TO MARRY MIYO TO ME...

...AS AN ACT OF PROTECTION FOR HER.

DO YOU HOLD ANY LOVE FOR HER AS HER FATHER?

...LOVE?

DID YOU SAY...

...FOR SUCH A WASTEFUL EMOTION?

WHAT USE DO I HAVE...

U

SHE IS NOTHING MORE THAN A PEST!

HOW MUCH MADNESS MUST THE USUBA BLOOD CAUSE BEFORE THIS IS OVER?

I MADE USE OF HER BECAUSE I THOUGHT SHE WOULD *BE* OF USE.

YET SEE WHERE THAT'S GOTTEN US?

I SHOULD HAVE DONE AWAY WITH HER YEARS AGO!

IS THAT SO.

WHY YOU—

SO, INDEED, THAT IS HOW YOU TRULY FEEL.

GASP

...I NO LONGER NEED TO HOLD BACK.

IN THAT CASE ...

SHF

YOU SHOULD RETURN HOME, LORD KUDO.

FATHER!

AND WHAT WILL YOU DO IF I TELL YOU?

SHE HAS ALREADY STATED THAT SHE WILL NOT SEE YOU OR RETURN WITH YOU.

SO YOU WERE THE ONE WHO KIDNAPPED MY FIANCÉE, TATSUISHI?

WHERE IS SHE?

KICK

I'M GETTING TO HER AND I'LL USE FORCE IF I HAVE TO.

DO AS YOU PLEASE.

I WILL REPORT YOU FOR TRES-PASSING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY.

IF YOU FORCE YOUR WAY THROUGH, THEN WE WILL NOT STAY QUIET ABOUT THIS AFFAIR.

GET OUT OF MY WAY IF YOU WON'T TELL ME WHERE SHE IS.

I WILL HEAR THAT FROM HER MOUTH AND NOT YOURS.

NO.

WHP

I THINK NOT!

SHIING

STEP

SHATTER

THAT WAS A DOUBLE BARRIER!

AND HE BROKE IT...

WHSH

YAA

AAGH!

RGH!

GRAB

WHOOSH

SLAM

AH!

SLUMP ぐぅ…

GLARE

CRNCH

HE REALLY IS...

...A CRUEL AND MERCILESS DEMON.

GULP

I CAN'T EVEN FEEL JEALOUS.

THE WAY HE REMAINS EXPRESSIONLESS DURING A DISPLAY OF SUCH INTIMIDATING STRENGTH IS SOMETHING ELSE.

THEY COULDN'T EVEN PUT UP A FIGHT.

BOTH POSSESS GIFTS AND HAVE REAL BATTLE EXPERIENCE.

BUT THE GAP BETWEEN HIS POWERS AND THEIRS WAS MASSIVE.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE MIYO MIGHT BE?

KOJI TATSUISHI.

OH!

THERE ARE NO HOLDING CELLS...

WHERE IN THIS HOUSE COULD THEY LOCK SOMEONE UP?

LOOK OUT!

FWOOOM

THE STORE-HOUSE IN THE BACK GARDEN.

AH!

USING FIRE IN THE HOUSE?!

HOW MUCH OF A FOOL CAN YOU BE?!

A BAR-RIER?

BWOOM

FZZZ

CRACKLE

CRACKLE

CRACKLE

CRACKLE

WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS?!

THE MANOR'S ON FIRE NOW!

FWOOOM

BZZZT

YOU WILL NOT...

...HAVE MIYO!

BOOM

THE SHOCK ONLY KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS.

THUD

BWOOOOM

...IF I BURNED TO DEATH HERE.

FATHER DIDN'T CARE...

CLENCH

THE STORE-HOUSE IS THIS WAY!

LET'S GO!

I AM LORD KUDO'S—

KIYOKA KUDO'S FIANCÉE.

HOW DARE YOU TALK BACK TO ME!

SMACK

YOU ARE A FAILURE!

I AM...

...DONE.

NO.

BOOOM

WHAT WAS THAT NOISE?

SLUMP

WHAT?

FWOOM

GO CHECK ON THINGS.

THMP

Y-YES, MA'AM.

I KNOW.

MO-THER?

WE SHOULD BE FO-CUSING ON—

...YOU DIDN'T DO THAT?

SURELY ...

I MUST NOT NOD.

SAY YOU'LL ANNUL YOUR ENGAGE-MENT WITH THE KUDO FAMILY.

SAY IT.

I...

...WILL NOT.

ON THIS POINT ALONE, I WILL NOT YIELD.

AT ANY COST.

YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND YOUR PLACE!

SLAM

JUST DO IT ALREADY!

GASP

GRIP

AH.

I THINK...

...I'M GOING TO DIE.

MY PAIN AND SADNESS RAN SO DEEP.

IT WAS SO TIRING JUST TO KEEP MYSELF GOING.

IT WASN'T LONG AGO...

...THAT THIS WAS HOW I LIVED MY LIFE.

BUT—

BECAUSE I THOUGHT...

...THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR ME IN THIS WORLD.

SIMPLY WAITING FOR THE DAY IT WOULD COME TO AN END.

RIGHT NOW...

...I DON'T WANT TO DIE YET.

I FOUND MY PLACE.

AND IT WAS BY HIS SIDE.

GRIT

SQUEEZE

I WILL NOT...

...SAY...

...IT.

I WILL NOT EVEN APOLOGIZE.

LORD KUDO.

I WILL NOT YIELD.

...WANT TO LEAVE YOUR SIDE.

I NEVER...

LORD ...

... KU...

... DO...

MIYO!

AH...

LONGING MORE THAN ANYTHING TO HEAR...

HUFF

...HIS VOICE.

THERE. I HAVE BEEN WAITING.

SO, SO PATIENTLY.

THUD

LORD ...

... KUDO?

SLUMP

MIYO!

HE REALLY CAME.

SLIP

...ALL THIS WAY JUST TO FIND ME.

HE CAME HERE...

I KNEW HE WOULD COME SAVE ME.

COUGH-

COUGH

HE'S SO GOOD.

...WHAT KIND OF PERSON HE IS.

BECAUSE I KNOW...

LORD ...

...KU...

...DO... YOU CAME.

YES.

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOW.

...SEEMS TO BE IN SUCH PAIN.

MY LORD...

COUGH

I FEEL TERRIBLE SHOWING HIM SOMETHING SO UNSIGHTLY.

DOES MY FACE LOOK THAT ROUGHED UP?

IS IT THAT BAD?

BUT THIS MARKS THE FIRST TIME...

THESE WOUNDS ARE A BADGE OF HONOR.

...THAT I DIDN'T CRUMPLE IN THE FACE OF INJUSTICE.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, MY WILL DID NOT BREAK.

MY SWOLLEN FACE IS PROOF OF IT.

GRIT

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER?

HUP

JUMP!

YOU INFLICTED SEVERE INJURIES UPON A DEFENSELESS PERSON.

WHAT WERE YOU TRYING TO DO TO HER?

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.

WELL, I—

CLUTCH

I WAS JUST TRYING TO FIX A MISTAKE.

I WAS JUST—

LOOK AT HER. DON'T YOU THINK IT'S AWFULLY STRANGE...

YES!

...THAT *SHE* MARRIES INTO YOUR FAMILY?

A MIS-TAKE?

...

WHY SHOULD SOMEONE LIKE HER MOVE UP HIGHER IN THE WORLD THAN *ME*?

THIS ISN'T RIGHT.

IT HAS TO BE A MISTAKE!

SHE DOESN'T HAVE SPIRIT-SIGHT.

SHE'S STUPID.

AND HER LOOKS? COME ON.

SHE CAN'T DO *ANYTHING*.

THAT I'M NOTHING LIKE HER!

AND LORD TATSUISHI SAID THE SAME THING!

BOTH MOTHER AND FATHER SAY THAT I'M THE BEST.

IN THAT CASE, THE WIFE OF THE KUDO FAMILY HEAD SHOULD BE *ME*!

SHE SEES THAT MIYO HAS BEEN GRANTED RIGHTS WHICH SHE BELIEVES SHOULD BE HERS.

THAT, TO HER, IS A MISTAKE...?

I SEE NOW THAT THIS GIRL DOES NOT HATE MIYO OUT OF MISGUIDED SPITE.

I CAN SYMPATHIZE.

BUT—

SIGH

HER PARENTS HAVE RAISED HER WITH A SKEWED PERCEPTION OF REALITY.

FREEZE

SILENCE.

I WOULD BE OF GREATER USE THAN HER!

I AM SUPERIOR IN ALL THINGS—

SPEAKING TO YOU IS A WASTE OF MY TIME.

WHY WON'T YOU TRY TO UNDER-STAND?!

YOU'RE AWFUL!

LADY SAIMORI!

MISS KAYA!

AND IT'S SPREADING THIS WAY!

THERE'S A FIRE!

WE CAN'T STAY HERE, KAYA!

YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE, TOO, LADY KANOKO.

NO—

RUSH

FWOOOM

NOT MY HOUSE!!

NO!

LORD KUDO, PLEASE WAIT!

YOU MUST LISTEN TO—

KAYA ?!

TP

I WOULD NEVER CHOOSE A WOMAN LIKE YOU.

NOW *MOVE.*

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH OF YOUR NONSENSE.

LOOKS? ABILITIES?

NONE OF IT MATTERS.

WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE.

KAYA.

GLARE

WHY IS IT TURNING OUT LIKE THIS?!

I KNOW I'M RIGHT!

NO!

PUSH

LET GO!

GRAB

STOP IT! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!

THIS IS ALL....

...BECAUSE OF THAT WORTH-LESS GIRL!

ALL OF IT!!

SHUT UP!

...

KOJI!

ISN'T IT MY SISTER YOU LOVE?!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.

WHAT?

GO ON, ESCAPE WHILE YOU CAN.

SNAP

MIYO IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN YOU ARE!

YEAH! YOU KNOW WHAT?!

I'M GLAD YOU NOTICED!

ALL HER SCARS COME FROM HER FAMILY!

YOU'LL ONLY BE HURTING HER EVEN MORE.

IF YOU DIE HERE, SHE'LL STILL GRIEVE *YOU*.

BUT DON'T YOU GET IT?

I CAN'T STAND TO SEE HER HURT AND CRYING ANYMORE.

I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.

COME ON.

BWOOOOOM

!

Chapter 17: Betrothal

MOTHER?

MIYO.

I—

MOTHER!

MOTHER, I...

...I CAN'T JOIN YOU YET.

...

BUT WE WILL...

...MEET AGAIN.

WHOOSHHHH

WHAT DID YOU S—

MOTHER?

I'M... HERE.

I'M ALIVE.

GASP

TO LORD KUDO'S HOUSE.

I CAME BACK.

OH—

OKAY.

OPEN UP.

I DO APPRECIATE IT, BUT I FEEL BAD.

AND EMBARRASSED.

MUNCH

MUNCH

LORD KUDO HAS BEEN LOOKING AFTER ME.

NOD

NOD

IS IT COOLED ENOUGH FOR YOU?

LOOM

I'M FINE.

OH, NO! I—

DO YOU FEEL ILL?

YOU LOOK PALE.

NO.

THE DOCTOR PRESCRIBED SEVERAL DAYS OF BED REST. YOUR BRUISES WERE HORRIBLE.

I CAN MOVE FINE ON MY OWN NOW, SO—

LORD KUDO, IF I MAY?

HOP

LEAVE THE HOUSEWORK TO OL' YURIE!

THAT'S RIGHT!

YURIE WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT ME TOO.

LADY MIYO!

LADY MIYO!

OH, YURIE...

N-NO... YOU DO IT.

OR SHALL I LEAVE THAT TO THE YOUNG MASTER?

ONCE YOU'RE FINISHED EATING, LET ME GIVE YOU A QUICK SPONGE BATH.

COME NOW.

ALL RIGHT, LADY MIYO?

SO THE SAIMORI MANOR BURNED TO THE GROUND?

IT'S ALL GONE?

YES.

BUT NO ONE DIED.

THAT'S A RELIEF.

IS KAYA GOING WITH THEM?

I BELIEVE YOUR FATHER WILL USE THIS OCCASION TO RETIRE.

I DOUBT THEIR LIVES THERE WILL BE VERY LUXURIOUS.

AS FOR WHAT WAS DONE WITH YOUR PARENTS...

...THEY WERE MOVED TO A COUNTRY HOUSE.

SHE IS NOT A DANGER IN THE CARE OF AN OUTSIDE FAMILY.

SHE MAY HAVE SPIRIT-SIGHT, BUT SHE HAS NO GIFT BEYOND THE USE OF A FEW CRUDE SPELLS.

PHEW

I SEE.

I'M GLAD THEY ALL HAVE A PLACE TO GO.

EVEN AFTER ALL THEY DID TO YOU...?

...

NO.

NEVER MIND.

HM?

NO. SHE ALONE RECEIVED A PARTICULARLY STRICT SENTENCE AND IS TO SERVE A WELL-KNOWN FAMILY.

SHE'S STILL YOUNG.

IT WILL DO HER GOOD TO EXPERIENCE A LITTLE HARD-SHIP AND LEARN THE WAYS OF THE WORLD.

...MINORU TATSUISHI'S ACTIONS HAVE NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC.

AS FOR THE TATSUISHI FAMILY...

BUT HE HAS TAKEN RESPONSIBILITY BY STEPPING DOWN AS CLAN HEAD IN FAVOR OF HIS ELDEST SON, KAZUSHI.

HE WILL NOT BE PUNISHED UNDER THE LAW.

THE NEW LORD HAS AGREED TO RESTRICTED MOVEMENTS UNDER MY FAMILY'S SUPERVISION.

THIS ESSENTIALLY PUTS THE TATSUISHI FAMILY UNDER OUR COMMAND.

THAT IS ALL.

SIGH...

I'M WORRIED ABOUT HIM AS THE NEXT CLAN HEAD.

ALL MY BROTHER EVER DOES IS PLAY AROUND.

KAZUSHI?

I THINK KOJI HAS MENTIONED HIM BEFORE.

NO.

THIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT AT ALL.

I'M REALLY SORRY.

I CAUSED TROUBLE FOR ALL THESE PEOPLE.

LORD KUDO?

UM... IF I MAY?

I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU.

I'M SORRY FOR THE ODD REQUEST.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING ME HERE.

THAT'S... ALL RIGHT.

HMPH

I HAD NO INTENTIONS OF BRINGING YOU TO THIS PLACE EVER AGAIN.

THANK YOU.

WATCH YOUR STEP.

IT'S STILL A BIT MUDDY.

EVERYTHING IS GONE.

...BUT. THERE WERE STILL A FEW HAPPY ONES.

THIS PLACE HELD SO MANY PAINFUL MEMORIES FOR ME...

OH!

THIS CHERRY TREE WAS PLANTED WHEN MY MOTHER MARRIED INTO THE FAMILY.

THE TREE STUMP?

YES.

...BUT I JUST...

IT'S BEEN CUT DOWN...

BUT IT DIED BEFORE I CAN REMEM-BER.

...WANTED TO SEE IT ONE LAST TIME.

SHHH

ZZT

I JUST FELT A SHARP PAIN.

MAYBE I HAVEN'T FULLY RECOVERED YET.

SQUEEZE

OH!

NOTH-ING.

WHAT IS IT?

YOU'RE READY TO GO ALREADY?

YES.

FSSSHHH

TOMORROW, THE WORK OF CLEARING AWAY THIS HOUSE WILL BEGIN.

...WILL BE ME.

AND THE SOLE REMAINING PROOF THAT MY MOTHER LIVED...

SHE'S PUSHING ME FORWARD.

AND THAT'S WHY SHE CALLED ME HERE.

SHE MUST HAVE KNOWN THIS WOULD BE THE LAST TIME.

I DON'T INTEND TO FORGET THE PAST.

BUT TODAY MARKS THE END OF ONE CHAPTER AND THE START OF ANOTHER!

I NO LONGER NEED TO CLING TO MY FEW HAPPY MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

BECAUSE NOW...

...I KNOW HOW TO FIND HAPPINESS ANEW.

OH, KOJI.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

WELL, THANK YOU.

YES— IT HAS.

IT'S, UM...

MIYO.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

I WON'T BE IN TOWN FOR MUCH LONGER.

DO YOU THINK... WE COULD TALK?

I'M GLAD.

THIS MIGHT BE MY LAST CHANCE.

I'LL BE AT THE CAR.

SIGH

THANK YOU SO MUCH, LORD KUDO.

AFTER MY MOTHER DIED...

...AND I LOST MY PLACE AT HOME...

...THE ONLY REASON I COULD KEEP GOING...

WE DID.

WE USED TO REST LIKE THIS BETWEEN GAMES WHEN WE WERE KIDS.

THIS TAKES ME BACK.

...WAS BECAUSE I GOT TO SPEND TIME WITH KOJI.

I COULDN'T DO ANY-THING, THOUGH.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING TO SAVE ME THE OTHER DAY.

ONCE AGAIN...

...I WAS USELESS.

I GUESS SO.

I SUPPOSE THAT MAKES IT ALL RIGHT, THEN.

THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.

STILL.

IT WAS BECAUSE OF YOU THAT LORD KUDO GOT THERE QUICKLY.

SADLY, ALL I COULD REALLY DO WAS GO GET LORD KUDO'S HELP.

GRIP

I HATED FEELING USELESS.

I REALLY ...

...REALLY HATED IT.

AND THEN I WAS SO DESPERATE TO SAVE YOU...

...BUT IN THE END, I COULDN'T DO A THING TO HELP.

I HAVE THE GIFT.

BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO REALLY MAKE USE OF.

I WAS RESIGNED TO A LIFE...

...OF MERELY CONTINU-ING MY BLOOD-LINE.

EVEN SO...

WITHOUT HIM...

WITHOUT ANYONE ON MY SIDE...

I KNOW...

...I WOULD NOT BE HERE RIGHT NOW.

HE WAS MY EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.

KOJI WOULD ALWAYS GET ANGRY ON MY BEHALF.

AND THAT'S WHY I MADE UP MY MIND.

I'M GOING TO REDO MY TRAINING.

IT'S THE PERFECT PLACE TO TRAIN.

...THAT REQUIRE USE OF THE GIFT, AS WELL AS POWERFUL GIFTED FAMILIES.

I'VE HEARD THAT OUT THERE, YOU CAN STILL FIND A LOT OF CASES...

I'M HEADED TO THE OLD CAPITAL.

THERE, I'LL START TRAINING AS A GIFT-USER.

BUT I MIGHT GROW POWERFUL ENOUGH TO REVITALIZE THE SAIMORI FAMILY.

THAT'S WHAT KUDO SAID, ANYWAY.

I'M STILL SET TO BE THE NEXT LORD SAIMORI.

HAHA

OH, BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MY ENGAGE-MENT TO KAYA GOT NULLIFIED.

I'M GOING TO GIVE IT MY ALL.

I KNOW HE'S GOING TO DO WHAT HE CAN TO PROTECT YOU.

AS FOR YOU, YOU HAVE KUDO NOW.

THEN I'LL ALSO BE ABLE TO PROTECT THOSE I HOLD DEAR.

BUT I'M GOING TO GET STRONGER.

YOU KNOW THE DAY I WAS CALLED TO THE SAIMORI HOUSE?

I WAS ABOUT TO SAY SOME-THING TO YOU.

DO YOU REMEMBER ?

AND, UH...

?

I'VE ALWAYS—

MIYO.

I DO.

I REMEMBER.

NO.

I'M SORRY.

I DON'T SEEM TO RECALL.

BUT...

...I KNOW THE ANSWER HE'S LOOKING FOR.

YOU DON'T?

NO. WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO TELL ME?

OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IT WASN'T A BIG DEAL.

YEAH.

IT WASN'T AT ALL.

ALL RIGHT.

...IF I KEEP YOU FOR TOO LONG.

KUDO MIGHT BE UPSET WITH ME...

WE SHOULD GET GOING.

KOJI.

IT'S SO SUNNY TODAY.

...FOR ALWAYS BEING MY FRIEND.

THANK YOU SO MUCH...

PAT

I'M BACK.

I'M SORRY THAT TOOK SO LONG.

TP

TP

TP

LORD KUDO!

WAS IT ALL WORTH YOUR WHILE?

YES.

...I'VE LOVED MIYO.

EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE...

...I FELT CONVINCED THAT I HAD TO BE THE ONE TO PROTECT HER.

WHENEVER I SAW HER LOOKING FRAGILE AND ON THE VERGE OF TEARS...

HER BRILLIANCE DREW ME TO HER.

SHE'S SWEET, THOUGHT-FUL...

...AND STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND THE HORRORS HER FAMILY SUBJECTED HER TO.

...THE ONE WHO WILL KEEP HER SAFE...

BUT...

...WILL NOT BE ME.

KOJI?

I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN.

SOME-DAY.

THANK YOU. FOR EVERYTHING.

YEAH.
WE'LL MEET
AGAIN!

PLEASE.

FIND YOUR
HAPPINESS.

THE PROCE-DURE WAS SIMPLE.

LORD KUDO AND I BECAME OFFICIALLY ENGAGED.

Signed:
Kiyoka Kudo
Miyo Saimori

WE WROTE OUR NAMES ON A DOCUMENT.

I DID TELL THEM TO STOP OFFERING BRIDES TO ME, THOUGH.

I'M SURE.

THEY'RE HERMITS. BEST LEAVE THEM ALONE.

AND I AM THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY.

WE DON'T NEED THEIR PER-MISSION.

UM.

ARE YOU SURE I DON'T HAVE TO MEET YOUR PARENTS?

YES.

THE FAMILY ELDERS ARE ALWAYS COLLECTING INFORMATION ON PARTNERS FOR ME.

OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

YOUR FATHER WAS THE ONE WHO PRESENTED ME TO YOU, WASN'T HE?

THE MOMENT MY FATHER GOT WIND OF A YOUNG MARRIAGEABLE WOMAN WHO MIGHT MAKE A GOOD BRIDE...

...HE WOULD PULL STRINGS TO HAVE HER BROUGHT OVER TO ME.

ゆいなり

GLOOM

OH...

I THINK WHEN HE APPROACHED THE SAIMORI FAMILY...

...HE WAS HOPING TO INTRODUCE YOUR SISTER TO ME.

BUT IT SEEMED SHINICHI SAIMORI WAS NOT KEEN ON LETTING HER GO.

SO HE SENT YOU INSTEAD.

I SEE.

MIYO.

BUT I'M GLAD YOU'RE THE ONE THAT CAME TO ME.

O-OH.

UM.

LORD KUDO?!

HEH

I'LL REDUCE HIM TO CINDERS WITHOUT A SECOND'S THOUGHT.

WON'T HE BE DISAPPOINTED WHEN HE MEETS ME?

BUT YOUR FATHER HAD KAYA IN MIND, DIDN'T HE?

I COULD HAVE SEEN THEM OFF, BUT I DIDN'T.

TODAY WAS THE DAY...

...FATHER, STEPMOTHER, AND KAYA LEAVE FOR THEIR NEXT DESTINATIONS.

...

THEY SHOULD BE ON THE TRAIN NOW.

I HAVE NOTHING MORE...

...TO SAY TO THEM.

I CROSSED A LINE.

MY LORD?

I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT ENTIRE INCIDENT.

SOMEONE HAD TO ACT...

...IN ORDER TO BREAK ME FROM MY PAST.

I HAD BELIEVED MY TIES WITH THEM WERE SEVERED WHEN I LEFT.

WHEN HE WENT TO MY FAMILY AND DEMANDED THAT THEY APOLOGIZE TO ME...

BUT THEY DIDN'T SEE IT THAT WAY.

...I DON'T THINK HE OVER-STEPPED.

BECAUSE YOU DID IT...

...FOR ME.

I DON'T THINK YOU CROSSED ANY LINES OR BOUNDARIES.

TRUE HAPPINESS IS KNOWING PEOPLE WILL WORRY ABOUT YOU.

BOTH LORD KUDO AND YURIE DO.

WHAT HAPPENED AT MY OLD HOUSE REMINDED ME OF THAT.

AND THAT MAKES ME HAPPY.

VERY HAPPY, IN FACT.

GRASP

MIYO.

YES?

I'M A LOWLY SOLDIER.

I KNOW THAT IN THE FUTURE...

I MAY BE SENT TO FIGHT GRIM BATTLES ONE DAY.

...I'M GOING TO CAUSE YOU EVEN MORE PAIN.

...I'M A BIT BORING, AREN'T I?

I KNOW IT SOUNDS ODD TO SAY THIS ABOUT MYSELF, BUT...

AND THEN THERE'S WHO I AM.

...WANT TO BE WITH YOU.

AND YET...

...I STILL...

I KNOW I CAN BE A HANDFUL.

BUT WILL YOU STILL MARRY ME?

I'D SOONER CALL MYSELF ONE, INSTEAD.

YOU'RE NOT A HANDFUL AT ALL.

...YOU WON'T REGRET THIS?

ARE YOU SURE...

I CHOSE YOU OF MY OWN VOLITION.

ABSO-LUTELY NOT.

I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT, THEN.

I CAN'T SAY I'M GOOD FOR MUCH, BUT...

...I WOULD. YES.

GOOD.

I'M VERY GLAD.

I WILL WALK THE REST OF MY LIFE'S PATH...

LORD KUDO AND I ARE NOW OFFICIALLY ENGAGED.

Signed: Kiyoka Kudo
Miyo Saimori

...HAND IN HAND...

...WITH THIS MAN.

Chapter 18: My New Life with Lord Kudo

ZZZZZZ

THWP

PHEW

IT'S GOING TO BE ANOTHER HOT ONE.

FWSH

FWSH

FWSH

I CAN'T LET MYSELF GO STARRY-EYED OVER HIM NOW.

OH NO.

WHP

LORD KUDO IS GORGEOUS ...

...EVEN WHEN TRAINING.

SIIIGH...

LORD KUDO.

FOR YOU.

PHEW

OH, THANK YOU.

BLUSH

!

YOU'RE ALL RED, MIYO.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

IS IT A FEVER?

DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT.

ARE YOU SURE?

SHFF

SHFF

UM—

NO!

I'M—

I'M OKAY.

SLUMP

AHH

I'M GOING TO RINSE OFF.

BE SURE TO REST IF YOU START FEELING ILL.

I-I WILL.

I THOUGHT I'D BE USED TO BEING AROUND HIM BY NOW.

MY HEART STARTS BEATING SO LOUDLY WHENEVER HE GETS CLOSE TO ME.

HELLO? ANYONE HOME?

OH, I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!

LEAN

HI! IT'S LOVELY TO MEET YOU.

YOU MUST BE MIYO!

T=T.P

T=T.P

T=T.P

I'M SORRY! MAY I HELP YOU?

I'M HAZUKI KUDO.

KIYOKA'S BIG SISTER!

...RELATED TO LORD KUDO?!

SHE'S...

O-OH, NICE TO MEET YOU...

SHE'S TALLER THAN THE AVERAGE WOMAN. SLENDER TOO.

HER HAIR IS BROWN WITH GENTLE WAVES.

HER SKIN IS SO DELICATE AND PALE.

THERE'S A GENTLE AIR ABOUT HER.

HEE

I CAN SEE LORD KUDO IN HER FEATURES TOO.

WOW.

A MODERN WOMAN!

IT HAS BEEN QUITE SOME TIME, LADY HAZUKI.

STAAARE...

YOU'RE LOOKING HEALTHIER THAN EVER!

THANK YOU.

WHP

WHP

GOODNESS, YURIE! IT REALLY HAS BEEN!

HOW MANY YEARS HAS IT BEEN SINCE I LAST SAW YOU?!

WHP

YOU NEVER CHANGE.

DO YOU, SISTER?

GOOD GRIEF.

HMPH

ARE YOU JUST GOING TO BE COLD AND ALOOF FOREVER?

OH, HONESTLY.

KIYOKA!

AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE AT WORK?

I'M OFF TODAY.

EVEN NOW THAT YOU HAVE HER?

YOUR CUTE LITTLE FIANCÉE?!

THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSI-NESS.

AND YOU'RE BOTHERING MIYO.

OH, OOPS.

I'M...

...CÜTE?

NOT AT ALL.

THAT'S RIGHT! MIYO—

OH, YOU DON'T MIND IF I JUST CALL YOU MIYO, DO YOU?

HE TOLD YOU ABOUT THIS, RIGHT?

RIGHT. KIYOKA ASKED ME A FAVOR.

I'M SUPPOSED TO BE YOUR TEACHER.

YOU WISH TO RETAKE LESSONS ON BEING A GENTLEWOMAN?

OH!

...

BUT THAT ALONE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH.

GRIP ギュッ

MY MAIN DUTIES WILL BE SUPPORTING HIM AND LOOKING AFTER THE HOUSE.

I'M TO BE LORD KUDO'S WIFE.

I DO.

IS THAT...

...ALL RIGHT?

...I WILL HAVE TO INTERACT WITH OTHER FAMILIES.

AS WIFE TO THE LORD OF SUCH A PRESTIGIOUS FAMILY...

DANCING FOR SOCIAL EVENTS, THE ART OF CONVERSATION, GENERAL KNOWLEDGE...

TEA CEREMONY, FLOWER ARRANGING, THE KOTO, ETIQUETTE.

I WILL NEED TO LEARN THINGS THAT WOMEN OF MY STATUS SHOULD ALL KNOW.

BUT I WAS VERY YOUNG, AND I ONLY LEARNED THE BASICS.

I DID RECEIVE SOME EDUCATION WHEN I LIVED IN THE SAIMORI HOUSE.

...BUT I CANNOT BE SATISFIED WITH HOW THINGS ARE.

LORD KUDO MAY NOT SAY ANYTHING...

I CANNOT ALLOW HIM TO CODDLE ME FOREVER.

...DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DO THIS?

I WON'T TELL YOU NO, BUT...

I'M NOT GOOD AT BEING SOCIAL, NOR AM I VERY WORLDLY.

I BELIEVE THAT LORD KUDO...

...IS THINKING OF HOW THIS WILL AFFECT ME.

YES.

I DO.

BUT I KNEW WHAT I WAS GETTING INTO WHEN I AGREED TO THIS.

IT MAY BE HARDER ON ME THAN I ANTICIPATE.

I MIGHT END UP OVERWHELMED IN MY DAILY LIFE.

PLEASE.

I CAN SEARCH FOR A TUTOR MYSELF.

I WON'T BE OF ANY BOTHER TO YOU.

AS USUAL, YOU KEEP YOUR HEAD...

...BOWED SO LOW.

SIGH

...

TOUCH

AND...

...YOU'RE VERY PALE.

AREN'T YOU PUSHING YOURSELF PAST YOUR LIMITS ALREADY?

BLUSHHH
あ
っ

I AM PERFECTLY FINE.

SHAKE

SHAKE

SHAKE

I—

I AM NOT!

LEAN

NOW YOU'RE SO RED THAT I WORRY YOU HAVE A FEVER.

HEH

GAPE

OH—

THIS—

UM—

AH—

GAPE

I JUST—

HMPH

PLEASE DON'T TEASE ME...

OH!

LORD KUDO!

HEH HEH

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.

I'M SORRY.

IT'S ALL RIGHT. DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER.

I'M JUST PUTTING AN IDLE WOMAN TO GOOD USE.

I'LL REACH OUT AND TELL HER TO COME.

BUT IT'S FINE BY ME.

I KNOW SOMEONE WHO COULD BE YOUR TUTOR.

HM?

YOU'LL TELL HER, NOT ASK HER?

...IT WOULD BE LORD KUDO'S SISTER WHO CAME.

AND THAT IS HOW THIS STARTED.

BUT I NEVER THOUGHT ...

WHAT'S *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

OH, WHY AM I NOT SURPRISED? OF COURSE HE DIDN'T TELL YOU I WAS COMING. THAT'S OUR KIYOKA!

IT'S OKAY, MIYO!

GRAB

I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.

AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT...

...YOU'LL BE A MAGNIFICENT NOBLEWOMAN!

HOW LOATH-SOME.

WHEEZE

HOW ODIOUS.

WHEEZE

HOW DISGUST-ING.

WHAT A TERRIBLE EYESORE.

SHF-

YES.

PEER

WHAT IS IT?

MAY I COME IN, YOUR MAJESTY?

WE HAVE NO MORE REASON TO CAUSE HER SUCH SUFFERING.

SHE IS TO BE PITIED.

IT IS TIME WE RECEIVE YOUR PERMISSION FOR THE MATTER AT HAND.

ALLOW US THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACCOMPLISH OUR DEAREST GOALS.

WATCH YOUR TONGUE.

LISTEN TO HOW YOU SPEAK TO ME.

HOWEVER, THINGS WILL CHANGE SOON.

APOLO-GIES, YOUR MAJESTY.

BUT YOU MUST ACT AT THE PRECISE MOMENT.

I SHALL GRANT YOU THE PERMISSION YOU SEEK.

SHF...

WE WILL PUT THINGS INTO MOTION.

UNDER-STOOD.

WHEEZE

I CANNOT *SEE* ANYTHING ANYMORE...

WHEEZE

AH...

DO YOU NEED ME, YOUR MAJESTY?

TIIING

LEAD THE SPIRITS OF THE *BURIAL GROUNDS* HOME.

IT MATTERS NOT IF THEY ARE LIVING OR DEAD.

GRIT

YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

WE WILL DESTROY THAT GIFT.

MEEEN

MEEEN

Chapter-19: Call Me Sister

SO, MIYO, YOU WANT TO LEARN HOW TO BE A NOBLE LADY, IS THAT RIGHT?

YES.

I AM A GRADUATE OF A WOMEN'S ACADEMY.

AND I'VE BEEN LEARNING THESE THINGS SINCE I WAS LITTLE.

I'M CONFIDENT I'LL BE ABLE TO TEACH YOU THE BASICS.

?

WHY WOULDN'T I BE?

BUT...

...ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY WITH ME?

MY OWN MARRIAGE FAILED.

AND YOU CAN'T BE HAPPY WITH YOUR SISTER-IN-LAW TEACHING YOU.

REALLY? ARE YOU SURE?

I DON'T MIND.

NOT AT ALL.

YES.

I CAN'T BELIEVE...

TWINGE

...I WAS SO INSENSITIVE.

I'M HAZUKI KUDO.

SHE DID INTRODUCE HERSELF AS "KUDO," DIDN'T SHE?

MAYBE SOMETHING WENT WRONG WITH THE FAMILY SHE MARRIED INTO.

OH!

HUG

OHHH, I'M SO GLAD!

I, UM—

WHAT?

RUB

I DIDN'T THINK KIYOKA WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU, SO I WAS REALLY WORRIED!

RUB

GOSH, YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD GIRL!

...NO.

THE IMMERSION WOULD BE SO MUCH BETTER FOR HER.

I COULD TAKE HER HOME AND TEACH HER.

AWW, BE NICE AND SHARE!

NO.

HEY!

CAN I KEEP HER?!

IF I TOOK MIYO AWAY...

YOU KNOW, YOU'RE RIGHT.

HEE HEE

POUT

...YOU'D BE SO SAD.

I'M RIGHT, AREN'T I?

HAZUKI ...

LORD KUDO IS SO NICE. HE ALWAYS IS.

SO IS LADY HAZUKI. EVEN THOUGH WE ONLY JUST MET.

BUT...

WHY IS THAT?

...AS I SIT HERE, WATCHING THEM BANTER...

...I FEEL SO ALONE.

JUMP

MIYO.

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

NO, I'M ALL RIGHT.

ARE YOU SURE? IF YOU'RE FEELING UNWELL—

BE SURE NOT TO PUSH YOURSELF, OKAY?

OH! I-IT'S NOTHING!

LORD KUDO HAS BEEN WORRYING ABOUT MY HEALTH RECENTLY.

HE'S SO GOOD TO ME.

I NEED TO BE STRONG.

ALL RIGHT.

I'M ALL RIGHT. TRULY.

IT'S OKAY.

WE NEED...

...GOALS?

OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

WE NEED TO SET SOME GOALS.

I SEE.

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.

IT'S HARD TO IMPROVE JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS, YOU KNOW?

YES!

YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE WORKING TOWARD WITH A GOAL.

WH—

YOU SHOULD COME WITH US.

I KNOW OF THE PERFECT PARTY THAT'S TAKING PLACE IN TWO MONTHS.

BOTH KIYOKA AND I WERE INVITED, YOU SEE.

I BARELY HAVE A GRASP ON SOCIAL ETIQUETTE.

I HAVE NEVER BEEN TO A PARTY BEFORE.

AND IT'S ONLY IN TWO MONTHS?!

A PARTY?!

A—

A PAR—

A P—

OKAY...

I WOULDN'T ASK YOU TO PUT ON A DRESS AND START DANCING.

YOU WON'T HAVE TO BE TOO FORMAL WITH THE HOST, EITHER.

IT'S LESS OF A PARTY AND MORE OF A CASUAL GET-TOGETHER.

IT'S OKAY.

STUDY IS MEANINGLESS WITHOUT PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

YOU SHOULD GIVE IT A GO.

LORD KUDO?

ALL RIGHT.

GRIP

I WANT TO CHANGE.

I WANT TO BE DIFFERENT.

HE'S RIGHT.

I'LL GO TO THE PARTY.

ALLOW ME TO JOIN YOU.

RRRMBL

READ THE TEXT-BOOKS AT YOUR LEISURE.

THEY'RE HARDLY USED AND NEARLY BRAND NEW.

I REALLY JUST CAME TODAY TO SAY HELLO.

MEEEN

I SUPPOSE SHE USED THESE WHEN SHE WAS ATTENDING THE ACADEMY.

LADY HAZUKI...

...LEFT ME SO MANY TEXTBOOKS.

ぱらFLIP

IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BOTHER HER, BUT MIYO REALLY DOESN'T LOOK HEALTHY.

IN TRUTH, SHE SHOULDN'T BE STUDYING. SHE SHOULD BE RESTING.

LIKELY BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T SLEEP WELL AT NIGHT.

BUT WHEN I SEE HOW HAPPY SHE LOOKS...

HOOT HOOT

SIGH

HM. I'LL KEEP AN EYE ON HER.

THERE IT IS AGAIN.

ZZZ...

THEY WERE SO FAINT AT FIRST THAT I WASN'T SURE.

THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNS EVER SINCE SHE CAME HERE.

THIS IS...

SHF

BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT IT NOW.

...THE PRESENCE OF A GIFT.

PLEASE.

STOP...

NO.

AT FIRST, I THOUGHT SOMEONE WAS USING A GIFT.

THE PRESENCE HAS GROWN MUCH STRONGER THAN IT WAS.

ZZZT

NOT MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT THE USUBA GIFT.

BUT IS THIS MIYO'S OWN POWER?

OR IS IT SOMEONE ELSE FROM THE USUBA FAMILY?

BUT...

COLD

SOB

AND I CAN SAY NOTHING FOR CERTAIN RIGHT NOW.

MIYO.

IT'S OKAY.

NGH...

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOW.

ZZZ...

SIGH

WHEN I HOLD HER HAND LIKE THIS...

SQUEEZE

...SHE GRADUALLY CALMS.

ZZZ

MIYO...

AND THIS IS ALL I CAN DO FOR HER NOW.

HOOT

HOOT

COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO

TIP

NIGHT ...

... AFTER NIGHT ...

A NIGHTMARE.

AGAIN.

WHEN I FIRST CAME HERE, I RELIVED A LOT OF PAINFUL MEMORIES FROM THE SAIMORI HOUSE.

BUT THERE'S BEEN SO MUCH MORE, LATELY.

STRANGERS YELL AT ME.

INSULTING ME.

TERRIBLE MONSTERS CHASE ME.

I WATCH PEOPLE DIE.

I GET SHUT IN SMALL, DARK SPACES.

SOMETIMES, I SEE LORD KUDO OR YURIE IN MY DREAMS.

THOSE ONES ARE ESPECIALLY PAINFUL.

THEY'RE JUST DREAMS.

BUT...

FOR A TIME...

...THINGS WERE BETTER, THANKS TO LORD KUDO'S HELP!

BUT THEY'RE WORSE NOW. AND I FEEL TERRIBLE.

I'M SO SCARED OF MY NIGHTMARES...

...THAT I DON'T WANT TO GO TO BED.

AND NOW I DON'T GET ENOUGH SLEEP.

I CAN'T WORRY LORD KUDO ANY MORE THAN I ALREADY HAVE.

SLAP

STILL!

I HAVE NO TIME TO STAY OFF MY FEET.

AND THERE'S A LOT I NEED TO GET DONE.

SIGH

HAVE A GOOD DAY AT WORK.

I'M OFF.

MEEEEZ

MEEEEZ

OH, I'M ALL RIGHT!

BE SURE NOT TO PUSH YOUR—

THE SUMMER HEAT SAPS ONE'S ENERGY.

LADY MIYO.

PHEW.

HOUSEWORK IS SECOND NATURE TO ME. MY BODY PRACTICALLY DOES IT ON ITS OWN.

SCRUB

SCRUB

I'M JUST A LITTLE TIRED LATELY.

I'LL PUSH THROUGH AND I'LL BE FINE.

I KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE WHAT AN EXQUISITE JOY IT IS TO HAVE THOSE WHO WORRY ABOUT YOU.

I'VE STARTED WORRYING YURIE TOO.

BUT I CAN'T LET THEM SPOIL ME ALL THE TIME.

YES, OF COURSE. I DON'T MIND.

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

I WANT TO STUDY A BIT BEFORE LADY HAZUKI COMES. IS THAT ALL RIGHT?

YURIE?

SHUUU

SHUUU

"A GOOD WIFE AND A WISE MOTHER"...

"...TO SUPPORT THE HOME...

"...AS WIFE AND MOTHER ALONGSIDE ONE'S HUSBAND"...

"HOW BEST...

To Maintain a House-hold

...WILL NOT ONLY SUPPORT HIM...!

...BUT WILL ALSO UPHOLD THE PRESTIGE OF THE KUDO NAME.

I THINK THE PERFECT WIFE FOR HIM...

I WANT TO BE A WIFE BEFITTING OF LORD KUDO.

ALL I CAN DO IS BASIC MINDING OF HIS MEALS, WARDROBE, AND SHELTER.

THAT MAKES ME NO BETTER THAN A SERVANT.

...THIS IS A MISTAKE.

I DON'T THINK...

BUT AM I TRULY FIT FOR THE ROLE?

I NEED TO GIVE IT MY ALL!

OH, STOP!

I ASKED LORD KUDO TO DO THIS.

ITO SMACK

LADY HAZUKI'S EVERY SLIGHTEST MOVEMENT...

...IS ELEGANT AND REFINED.

WELL THEN, MIYO.

SHALL WE GET STARTED?

...ACTING ANYTHING LIKE HER AT THE PARTY.

I CAN SCARCELY IMAGINE MYSELF...

IS IT?

OH.

THE WAY YOU CARRY YOURSELF NOW IS PERFECTLY GRACEFUL.

OH, NO NEED TO LOOK SO ANXIOUS.

...SO AS NOT TO TARNISH MY FAMILY'S GOOD NAME.

YES, IT'S VERY TRUE THAT...

...I ALWAYS TOOK GREAT CARE WITH MY BEHAVIOR...

PERHAPS YOU'VE INTERNALIZED THE BASICS IN YOUR MANNERISMS.

YOU DID TAKE LESSONS WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, RIGHT?

...PROVED USEFUL.

SNIFF

I DO THINK THAT WHAT I LEARNED IN MY LESSONS...

UM—

HHHUUUG

MIYOOO!

ER, LADY HAZUKI?

YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD GIRL! TOO GOOD!

I WANT YOU TO THINK OF ME AS AND CALL ME YOUR SISTER, OKAY?

OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

LISTEN, MIYO.

S...

...SIS—

YOU'RE MY—

UM... OKAY.

OH.

SHINER

SISTER DEAREST.

4

I REMEMBER THE WAY SHE LOOKED AT ME, THE WAY HER VOICE SOUNDED...

...WHEN SHE CALLED ME-THAT.

KAYA ISN'T HERE ANYMORE.

BUT THAT WORD REMINDS ME OF HER.

...

JUMP

I WANT TO BE BETTER FRIENDS WITH YOU.

MIYO.

FAMILY...

I KNOW IT'S NOT EASY TO TELL WHAT KIYOKA'S THINKING...

...BUT I'M PRETTY POSITIVE HE WANTS THE SAME.

I WANT TO BE SOMEONE YOU CAN RELY ON.

WE'RE GOING TO BE FAMILY SOON.

AH.

THAT'S RIGHT.

ALL THOSE DAYS OF FEAR...

...ARE MY MEMORIES OF MY FAMILY.

WHAT I FELT WHEN I SAW HOW CLOSE LORD KUDO AND LADY HAZUKI ARE...

...WAS JEALOUSY OVER A HAPPY FAMILY.

HEY, ARE YOU SICK, COMMANDER?

ACHOO

I GUESS I CAN AT LEAST GIVE KIYOKA CREDIT FOR HAVING THE SENSE TO CHOOSE WELL.

YOU'RE THE BEST, MIYO. YOU'RE SO CUTE AND SO GOOD.

KIYOKA'S THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THAT!

GRRR

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED A CUTE LITTLE SISTER!

JUST RELAX AND THINK OF ME AS A SISTER, OKAY?

...YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT BEING SO FORMAL WITH ME.

AND THAT'S WHY...

OKAY...

BUT DON'T FORCE YOURSELF, OF COURSE.

LADY HAZUKI — IS BEING SO CONSIDERATE OF ME.

UM.

S—

SHE WOULD BE DELIGHTED.

SHE WOULD BEAM IF I CALLED HER THAT.

SISTER.

...WOULD YOU MIND IF I JUST CALLED YOU HAZUKI?

IS THAT ALL RIGHT?

I'M SORRY.

WOULD YOU, UM...

SMILE

PLEASE DO!

NOT AT ALL!

THANK YOU...

WE'VE DROPPED THE "LADY"—AT LEAST IT'S PROGRESS!

LADY HAZUKI— THAT IS, HAZUKI...

...IS JUST AS NICE...

...AS LORD KUDO.

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR WORK, KIYOKA.

NO. I CAME MUCH TOO EARLY.

PARDON MY TARDINESS, MAJOR GENERAL OKAITO.

MEEEN

MEEN

MASASHI OKAITO

IMPERIAL ARMY, GENERAL STAFF OFFICE. RANK: MAJOR GENERAL. AGE: 40.

MANY FROM HIS FAMILY BECOME SOLDIERS, AND HE IS EXPECTED TO BECOME HEAD OF HIS CLAN ONE DAY.

Chapter 20: An Audience

VERY MUCH SO.

I MUST TELL YOU THIS BEFORE WE HEAD TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE.

...IT IS OFFICIALLY COMMANDED BY MAJOR GENERAL OKAITO WITHIN THE MILITARY.

WHILE THE ANTI-GRO-TESQUERIE UNIT IS UNDER THE EMPEROR'S DIRECT CONTROL...

THERE'S BEEN A GRAVE ROBBING.

IT IS OUR JOB TO DEAL WITH WHAT LAYMEN CALL GHOSTS.

A GRAVE MEANS THE SPIRIT HAS BEEN PUT TO REST.

BUT CEMETERIES ARE HOME TO SURPRISINGLY FEW HARMFUL SPIRITS.

IF I MAY... I THINK THAT'S A JOB FOR THE POLICE.

DON'T TELL ME—

I DON'T MEAN ORDINARY GRAVES.

SOMEONE HAS TRESPASSED UPON THE *FORBIDDEN LAND.*

!

THE FORBIDDEN LAND.

IT IS WHERE THE MINISTRY OF THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD GUARDS SECRETS...

...OF PAST EMPERORS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND THE GIFTED.

JUST AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, IT IS AN AREA FAR FROM CIVILIZATION. NONE ARE PERMITTED TO ENTER.

AND THE GRAVES WITHIN THAT AREA—

NO...

THE BURIAL GROUNDS.

HOME TO THE GRAVES OF THE GIFTED IN THE FORBIDDEN LAND.

THOSE WITH THE GIFT AND SPIRIT-SIGHT GENERALLY HAVE HIGHER SUPERNATURAL POWER.

EVEN IN DEATH, THEIR SPIRITS CANNOT BE PUT TO REST WITH REGULAR RITES.

THE BURIAL GROUNDS ARE WHERE THE SPIRITS OF THOSE GIFT-USERS HAVE BEEN SEALED AWAY.

YES.

THE BURIAL GROUNDS HAVE BEEN OPENED.

MANY OF THEM DIE IN BATTLE HARBORING INTENSE PAIN AND HATRED.

AND ONCE THEY BECOME SPIRITS, THEY LOSE ALL SENSE OF REASON.

THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT SORT OF DAMAGE THOSE FREED SPIRITS MIGHT CAUSE.

HOW MUCH OF THE SEAL HAS BEEN UNDONE?

SHF

THEY'RE BEING TIGHT-LIPPED ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON.

THE IMPERIAL SORCERERS HAVE IT MOSTLY UNDER CONTROL, OR SO THEY SAY.

BUT WHAT DOES "MOSTLY" MEAN?

GOOD. GO AHEAD AND DO THAT.

WHICH MEANS THEY WERE UNABLE TO CONTAIN ALL OF THE DAMAGE.

WE WILL REMAIN ON ALERT.

YES. I'M READY.

THAT'S ALL.

YOU READY TO LEAVE NOW?

AH, THAT'S RIGHT, KIYOKA.

I HEARD YOU GOT ENGAGED.

I DID.

NONE OF THAT COMMOTION WAS HER FAULT.

I KNOW YOU TWO HAVE HIT A FEW BUMPS.

BUT YOU MUST GET ALONG PRETTY WELL IF YOU DECIDED TO GET MARRIED AFTER ALL THAT.

I SUPPOSE SO, YES.

...THOSE STORIES ABOUT YOU NOT CARING FOR WOMEN WERE ALL WRONG, HUH?

STILL, I GUESS THAT MEANS...

SORRY.

HEH

SKRRT

YOUR COMPANION IS WAITING FOR YOU.

HE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE ANY MORE TRUST THAN HE ALREADY HAS.

OF COURSE HE WOULD BE.

THE NEW LORD TATSUISHI IS SURPRISINGLY SERIOUS ABOUT THIS.

WOW. HE'S BEATEN US HERE.

...HIS ELDEST SON, KAZUSHI, TOOK ON THE MANTLE OF THE NEW LORD TATSUISHI.

WHEN THE PREVIOUS HEAD, MINORU TATSUISHI, STEPPED DOWN AFTER COMMITTING A CRIME...

HE HANDLES COMPLEX PROCE-DURES WITH EASE.

AND HE HAPPILY COMPLIES WITH POLICE AND MILITARY QUESTIONING.

KAZUSHI HAS ALWAYS BEEN INFAMOUSLY ROGUISH.

BUT HE IS FULFILLING HIS ROLE AS SUCCESSOR WITH SURPRISING GRACE.

HELLO THERE...

...OKAITO, KUDO.

HIS FLASHY MANNER AND LOOKS LED ME TO BELIEVE...

...THAT HE WOULD BE INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH.

BUT HE'S SURPRISINGLY COOPERATIVE.

YOU CANNOT SERIOUSLY BE WEARING *THAT* TO AN IMPERIAL AUDIENCE.

TATSUISHI.

UGH...

YES, I SUPPOSE YOU ARE CORRECT.

I'M NOT A SOLDIER. I SHOULD BE FREE TO WEAR WHATEVER I LIKE, NO?

GIFT-USERS HAVE NEVER BEEN BOUND BY CONVENTIONAL RULES, HAVE WE?

AND IT IS EVIDENCE OF JUST HOW SPECIAL THOSE WITH THE GIFT ARE.

IT HAS BEEN THIS WAY SINCE LONG BEFORE THE MEIJI RES-TORATION.

AS LONG AS A GIFT-USER OBEYS THE EMPEROR, NO OTHER RULES APPLY.

GLIMMER と

Bright Colors

十一

Yellow

Red

BUT EVEN SO, I THINK WE COULD STAND TO ADHERE TO THE BARE MINIMUM OF ETIQUETTE.

...KUDO.

THIS IS MY FORMAL WEAR...

AHAHA

GIVING ME THE SHIVERS, KUDO.

YOU'VE GOT YOUR HANDS FULL

BUT SHOULD THIS HAPPEN AGAIN...

...I WILL CUT YOU DOWN.

I WILL ALLOW THIS TO PASS JUST THIS ONCE.

OKAITO, KUDO, AND TATSUISHI ARE HERE.

PARDON US, YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS.

COME IN.

IT IS A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU AGAIN...

SHF

...PRINCE TAKAIHITO.

HIS EYES ARE NARROW AND HARD TO READ.

HIS LIPS, BRIGHT RED.

HIS SKIN IS OF PURE WHITE.

...HIS ETHEREAL APPEARANCE IMBUES HIM WITH A SILENT MAJESTY.

THOUGH WE ARE OF THE SAME AGE...

HE IS KNOWN ONLY AS TAKAIHITO.

HE HAS NO LAST NAME.

AND THE FIRST IN LINE AS HEIR TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE.

THIS IS A SON OF THE EMPEROR.

BECAUSE I GREW UP IN THE KUDO FAMILY, A FOREMOST GIFTED FAMILY...

...HE AND I HAVE BEEN CLOSE...

...FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE.

IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU, MASASHI AND KIYOKA.

AND OUR NEW LORD TATSUISHI.

LIFT YOUR HEADS.

AND BE AT EASE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THIS HONOR.

SHF

PRINCE TAKAI-HITO.

PLEASE ALLOW LORD TATSUISHI TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF.

I HAVE RECENTLY ASSUMED THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF MY FAMILY.

I AM KAZUSHI TATSUISHI.

ALLOW ME TO OFFER MY DEEPEST THANKS, YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS.

I AM TRULY HUMBLED AND HONORED THAT YOU HAVE ALLOWED ME AN AUDIENCE...

...REGARDLESS OF THE CRIMES THAT A MEMBER OF MY FAMILY HAS SO REGRETTABLY COMMITTED.

I WILL MAKE THE GREATEST EFFORTS TO DO SO.

ACT AT THE KUDO FAMILY'S BEHEST AND RESTORE YOUR HONOR AND TRUST.

I ABSOLVE THE TATSUISHI FAMILY IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR.

I AM DEEPLY SORRY THAT I WAS NOT STRONG ENOUGH.

IT IS MOST UNFORTUNATE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SAIMORI FAMILY.

AND YOU, KIYOKA. YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH QUITE A LOT.

...BUT MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY HAVE ALREADY BEEN PUNISHED, SO IT'S A BIT OF A MUDDLE.

THERE WOULD TYPICALLY BE AN INQUIRY INTO WHO IS TO BLAME...

IN THE EYES OF THE EMPIRE...

...THE DEPARTURE OF A GIFTED FAMILY IS A GREAT LOSS.

GASP

THIS, TOO, WAS THE HANDS OF FATE AT PLAY.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE WERE INFORMED YOU HAD A DIVINE REVELATION.

IF I MAY, PRINCE TAKAIHITO.

I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOUR GENEROUS WORDS.

IT IS SAID THAT THE GODS INFORM THOSE WITH THIS GIFT OF CALAMITIES THAT MAY BEFALL THIS LAND.

IT IS THE GIFT OF PROPHECY.

DIVINE REVE-LATION.

THAT IS THE GIFT THAT HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN THROUGH THE IMPERIAL BLOODLINE.

...AND WORK TO EVADE OR MINIMIZE IT.

PAST EMPERORS WOULD LEARN OF IMPENDING DISASTER...

...IS TO FOLLOW DIVINE REVELATIONS AND BATTLE AGAINST GROTESQUE-RIES.

IT IS WRITTEN IN HISTORY THAT A GIFT-USER'S DUTY...

BUT IT MUST BE SERIOUS IF HE HAS SUMMONED US HERE TO SPEAK WITH US DIRECTLY.

ONLY HIS SECOND SON, TAKAIHITO, INHERITED THE GIFT OF DIVINE REVELATION.

IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE WE GIFT-USERS...

...WERE SENT ON A MISSION BASED ON A REVELATION FROM PRINCE TAKAIHITO.

THE CURRENT EMPEROR IS IN POOR HEALTH.

INDEED.

YOU ARE AWARE THAT THE SEAL ON THE BURIAL GROUNDS HAS BEEN UNDONE, YES?

BE CAUTIOUS.

THIS WILL LEAD TO WAR.

ONE MISSTEP AND SOME MAY LOSE THEIR LIVES.

MM.

THAT IS ALL I SAW.

LOSE THEIR LIVES?

WHO?

I SEE.

I WILL KEEP THIS IN MIND.

WE MUST FIGHT WITH ALL WE HAVE.

WE MUST RESTORE THE SEAL.

OTHERWISE, GREAT HARM COULD COME TO THE PEOPLE.

GRIP

YES?

AND KIYOKA?

I HEAR YOU'VE GOTTEN ENGAGED.

IT'S ABOUT TIME.

NOT THIS AGAIN.

SORRY!

UGH

YOUR FIANCÉE...

I HAVE.

...HAS QUITE THE HARDSHIP AHEAD OF HER.

...YOU SHOULD BE FINE.

HEE HEE

BUT...

...A REVELA-TION?

IS THAT ALSO...

PRINCE TAKAIHITO WILL NOT TELL ME EVERYTHING. OF COURSE NOT.

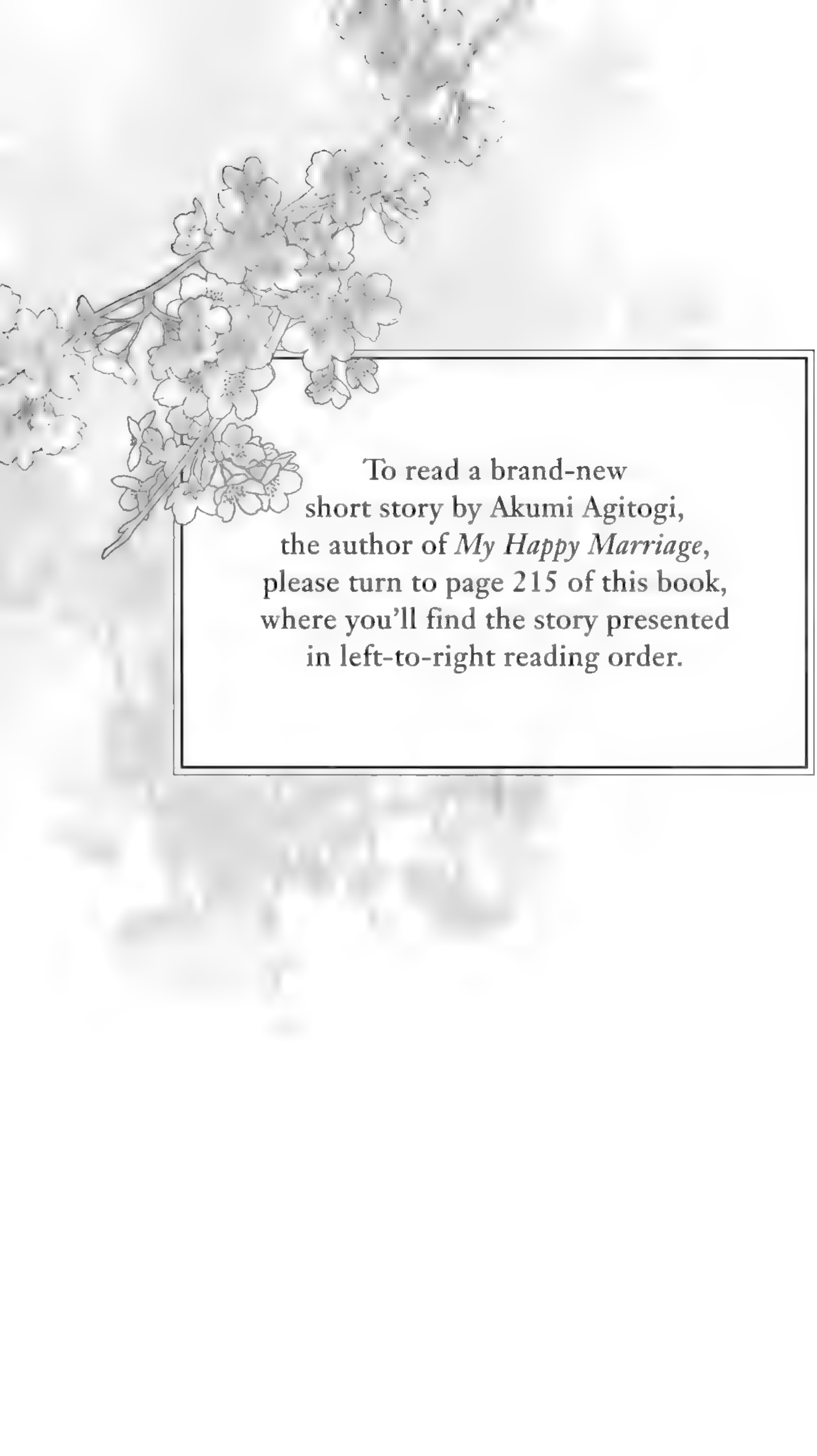
BUT THERE MUST BE SOME SIGNIFICANCE HERE.

IT CONCERNS MIYO, AFTER ALL.

I SHALL BEAR THAT IN MIND.

My Happy Marriage, Vol. 3 • END

MY HAPPY MARRIAGE



To read a brand-new
short story by Akumi Agitogi,
the author of *My Happy Marriage*,
please turn to page 215 of this book,
where you'll find the story presented
in left-to-right reading order.

This was a surprise. She had honestly thought that Kiyoka, being the man of the house that he was, never stepped foot into the kitchen.

Her thoughts must have been written all over her face. The corners of his mouth turned downward in a pout.

"I know how to make *tea*."

Miyo took the teacup he stiffly pushed at her.

The warmth coming from her fingertips seemed to be the embodiment of his consideration for her, and a smile naturally bloomed across her lips.

The drying tear tracks on her face chilled in the air.

"Did you have another bad dream?"

A *bad* dream? Something caught at her mind when she heard the word *bad*.

It was bad, yes. Shinichi had always brushed away Miyo's desperate pleas with a single word, and his indifferent attitude toward her had robbed her of her home, of her right to live among the Saimoris as part of the family.

But she remembered the final moment of the dream.

I felt empty.

Frowning, she gazed into Kiyoka's worried eyes.

She was sure that one day, if she could live out a peaceful life with him, she would stop thinking about the Saimori family, with its father, stepmother, and half sister.

And when that happened, everything from back then would grow hazy in her mind, much like how Shinichi's face blurred in her tear-stained vision, until only fuzzy memories remained.

"I…don't know."

Would there ever come a day when a feeling of nostalgia for the past would blot out the pain and suffering still fresh, even now, in her heart? Would she ever become capable of hoping that such a day would arrive?

"Miyo."

"Yes?"

With a small sigh, Kiyoka glanced over at the table.

Sitting atop it was a tray loaded with teacups, much like the one she gave her father in her dream. Beside it was a teapot she had grown accustomed to seeing and using every day since coming to this house.

"I made tea. Do you want some?"

"Oh, you…made tea?"

The sound of pouring rain echoed in her ears.

Miyo blinked open heavy eyelids and gazed past the veranda, into the garden, to find it getting drenched in a downpour.

For a moment, she thought she had never awoken from her dream, and fear seized her. She felt the blood drain from her face, overcome with the distinct sense that she had still been living in the Saimori house this entire time.

"You're awake."

There came a voice. She whipped her head around to find her fiancé, worry written across his beautiful face.

"My lord...?"

"Hmm? You're still half-asleep, aren't you?"

There was bafflement and exasperation in his tone. The question prompted her to think back on everything that happened before she fell into her dream.

Once the chores were finished, Yurie went home and Miyo sat down to rest. And as she did so, she leaned her head against the wooden post beside her and drifted off to sleep.

"Oh—my apologies!"

As clarity came back to her, the more embarrassed she became.

Kiyoka was scheduled to come home early that day, so he must have returned while Miyo was asleep. She was a failure of a fiancée for dozing off without realizing.

As her apology reached his ears, Kiyoka gave a sigh of displeasure. "Enough apologies. Do you know, you were crying out in your sleep?"

"Oh...!"

One remaining tear rolled down Miyo's cheek.

She had assumed that was only in the dream, but it seemed she had shed actual tears in her sleep.

She was not sad because of what Shinichi said to her. She was sad for her past self, a girl who could not even cry when her own father spoke heartless words to her.

Crying out of self-pity is the height of shame.

She desperately tried to keep the tears at bay, but they spilled forth regardless.

For the very first time, she pitied her past self. Until that point, she had been too focused on surviving each day to have the time or energy to look back objectively at herself.

But now she knew—at last someone had told her that she's allowed to care for herself, that she's allowed to express hopes and dreams.

She should have gotten angry with her father. She should have cried.

Perhaps something would have changed if she had. But the Miyo of the past had found it unbelievably difficult to do something so simple.

Enduring and repressing pain and sadness was so much easier than giving any sort of emotional reaction.

I want to go home.

She wanted to go home to a place where she could breathe, where she could *live*. And that was not this house at all.

Shinichi returned his gaze to his desk. His crying daughter was not even a thought in his mind, though perhaps that was because this was only a memory of the past.

The light and the sounds slowly faded and receded.

As relief washed over her, knowing that she could go home to a place where she could relax, she also felt the strangest twinge of emptiness.

◆ ◆ ◆

Shinichi sat at his low desk. He must have noticed that it was his daughter who had come in, but he did not turn around, much less respond.

Miyo knelt beside him and gently set the teacup down within his reach. When she stood to leave, Shinichi at last focused his gaze on her.

"You're still here?" he muttered, an offhand remark.

Yet within this dream Miyo froze. All around her fell silent.

Still.

She knew the question that came next was, "How long are you going to be here?"

How long…in this study? No—in the house.

It did not matter that Shinichi himself had quashed every opportunity Miyo may have had to become independent. He had stomped all over everything so blithely, so easily, as if presented with nothing more than a bothersome insect.

Now I…remember.

He had said those very words to her in this exact situation. This was a dream of something that really happened.

Ah, but how had she reacted at the time to her father's hurtful words, uttered so quietly? Had they made her angry? Sad? No—neither.

As she looked at her father's face, she found his image blurring.

Lukewarm tears fell onto her roughened, scraped-up, bony hands as she gripped the tray.

At the time, she had felt nothing. Her heart was so firmly closed off that her father's emotionless words had inspired no emotion in her.

But now she felt a clear and keen sadness.

a women's academy to continue her education. Of course he would allow her to go if she asked.

"You? Go to a women's academy? We don't have that sort of money to waste."

What she received in response was a cold dismissal and an even colder stare.

Every time he gave her a look like she wasn't even his own daughter, every time her wishes were shattered, she had the vague sense that something inside of her was breaking. She stopped hoping.

When she wanted to attend a women's academy...

When she was going to be forced to quit her lessons...

When Kanoko and Kaya came and stole or threw out her belongings and she asked that he furnish her with new ones...

When she begged to at least receive a set of basic necessities for herself...

When she requested to at least be allowed to leave the house and work on her own...

Each and every time, she would come to him and ask. She would grovel so low she could feel her forehead scrape along the tatami floor.

But...

The answer was always no.

We don't have that sort of money or time to waste on you. A daughter working outside would ruin our reputation. I'm the one who would have to take the blame should someone uneducated like you end up bringing dishonor to us.

With every rejection, her heart froze over a little more. Her body would grow paralyzed. Asking for anything was wrong. It became ingrained in her mind that all hope was pointless.

"Excuse me," she called, entering her father's study.

How realistic this dream was.

One of the Saimori servants called Miyo over, and she took from her a tray with a teacup on it.

She couldn't refuse. All of the servants were always overly conscientious of her to begin with. They even took care to station her where she would not have any run-ins with the other family members. It was as if they were wholly unsure of what to do with someone like Miyo, who was a daughter of the family and yet treated like a servant.

The family did not have that many servants; it was obvious that the house truly was short-staffed. How could she say no?

Going along with the dream, she obediently took the tray and headed down the hall.

When she lived in this house, she almost never entered her father's study. Rarer still was it for Miyo and her father to speak to one another at all; she had very few memories of that ever happening.

"Father, I'd like to attend a women's academy."

One exception, however, was the memory of a time she made that desire known. She was in elementary school then.

At that young age, she could have never imagined that she would still be working at home like a servant at nineteen.

Her father, Shinichi, had always been indifferent to her.

It did not matter what her stepmother, Kanoko, or her half sister, Kaya, did or said to her. He would watch in silence, refusing to even lift a finger to help her. He acted like she did not even exist.

At the time, however, she had underestimated her father's willingness to grant her requests. After all, she was a daughter of the Saimori family; it was only natural for her to go on to

Rain

by Akumi Agitogi

Rain drizzled gently outside.

The next thing Miyo knew, she was in the Saimori manor. The house was enveloped in the soft sounds of rain.

I must be dreaming.

She had been having so many nightmares of late. It was like the dreams themselves had a will of their own—as though their only purpose was to cause her pain, to remind her that she could never know happiness. The nightmares were constant since the day she came to Kiyoka. This one, she thought, will be much the same.

Suppressing a sigh, she glanced out at the eaves of the house.

It must be the rainy season, I suppose.

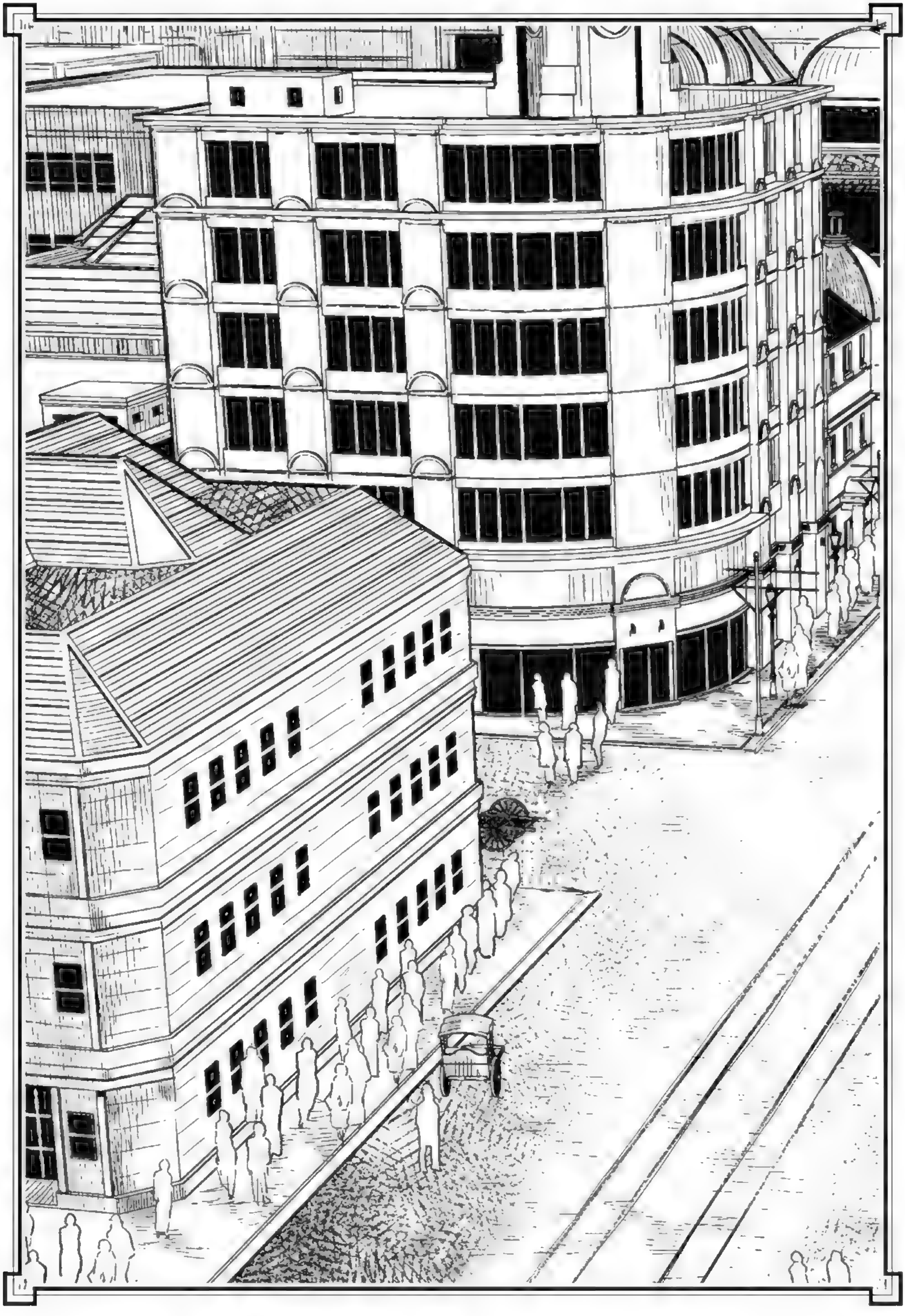
She didn't dislike rain. As she watched the droplets fall to the earth and as she concentrated on the quiet sounds of them bursting, she could feel her consciousness meld into the water.

Oh, how pleasant would it be if her whole body and soul would evaporate away and vanish from existence. The thought rolled around in her mind, over and over.

But no matter how she may enjoy the rain, the rainy season itself was a dreary one for her. When it rained, those in the house were shut up inside—Miyo as well as everyone else.

"I'm sorry, Miss Miyo, but could you take this to Lord Saimori?"

"All...right."



YOSHITO GODO

KIYOKA KUDO

MIYO SAIMORI

YURIE

HANA

KEIKO

KAYA SAIMORI

KOJI TATSUISHI

KAZUSHI TATSUISHI

DRAWING ROOM

MIYO'S COOKING IS SOOO GOOD!

BAMBOO SCREEN

SLIDING DOOR

USED IN SUMMER

THIS IS THE YOUNG MASTER'S ROOM.

STUDY

MIYO'S ROOM

IT'S SO BIG!

MY ROOM IN THE SAIMORI HOUSE WASN'T EVEN HALF THIS SIZE!

I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME HERE.

SITTING ROOM

MY HAPPY MARRIAGE

AND SHE PRAYS HER HAPPY DAYS WITH LORD KUDO WILL LAST FOREVER...

BECAUSE I AM.

YOU'RE NOT?

HOW COULD I BE... LONELY?

MY HAPPY MARRIAGE

Continues in Volume 4

NEXT VOLUME

MY HAPPY MARRIAGE

MY HAPPY MARRIAGE

3

ORIGINAL CONCEPT
AKUMI AGITOGI
(Fujimi L Bunko/KADOKAWA)

ART
RITO KOHSAKA

CHARACTER DESIGN
TSUKIHO TSUKIOKA

Translator: Jasmine Bernhardt ◆ Letterer: Lys Blakeslee
Logo Designer: Wendy Chan (Yen Press)
Cover Designer: Abigail Blackman ◆ Editor: Sarah Tangney

My Happy Marriage Volume 3
© Akumi Agitogi Licensed by KADOKAWA CORPORATION
© 2021 Rito Kohsaka/SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD.
All rights reserved.
First published in Japan as *Watashi no Shiawase na Kekkon* in 2021 by SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD.
English translation rights arranged with SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. and SQUARE ENIX INC.
English translation © 2023 by SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD.

The names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this publication are fictitious. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased), places, buildings, and products is intended or should be inferred.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means without permission in writing from the copyright holders. Thank you for buying an authorized copy of this work and supporting its creators.

ISBN (ebook): 978-1-64609-635-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available upon request.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022916028

Published by Square Enix Manga & Books, a division of SQUARE ENIX, INC.
999 N. Pacific Coast Highway, 3rd Floor
El Segundo, CA 90245, USA

SQUARE ENIX
MANGA & BOOKS
square-enix-books.com